

Tummy Time



Why infants should spend time on their tummy when they are awake, and a few suggestions as to how the tummy position can be varied.

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Infants need to spend time on their tummy when they are awake.

There are many advantages in enabling small children to spend time on their tummy, when they are awake and supervised. Spending time on their tummy will promote the baby's motor development, head control and upper body strength. Another advantage is that it relieves the constant pressure on the back of the baby's head from lying on the back. Continuous pressure on one side of the head can affect the shape of the head, e.g. flattening of the head.

The earlier the infant starts to spend time on their tummy the more natural this position will become. It is advisable to let the infant get used to lying on its tummy right from the start. For example as a newborn the baby will spend short periods of time on the tummy whilst awake. It then becomes a natural part of their daily routine. When infants are on their tummy they learn to pivot, turn, roll, crawl and pull themselves along the floor. Infants who spend very little or no time on their tummy tend to develop motor skills later than children who have tummy time. It can be frustrating for infants who are later developers not to be able to move by themselves. Plenty of playtime on the tummy will provide the infant with the best opportunity to develop their motor skills.

During a child's first year their head grows at a rapid rate (85%), at the same time as the skull is soft and pliable. If the infant is always lying with the head in the same position on their back there is a risk of developing a flattened head. By helping the infant to vary the head position this could be prevented. The time spent in a car seat (when not travelling in the car), traditional babysitter and other passive seating equipment should be limited as the infant lies on their back in a car seat or babysitter. When the infant is on their back suspend toys or other interesting items above them alternating between the left and right sides to encourage a variation of the head position.

Not all children enjoy being on their tummy especially if they are a little older before they are introduced to this position.

If your child finds it difficult to accept being on their tummy, try for very short periods initially repeated several times during the day.

The best way to prevent head asymmetry in the very young is to provide the parents with information and knowledge. If your child has developed e.g. a flattened head please make an appointment with the Doctor/discuss with the Health Visitor.

In accordance with current research infants are recommended to always sleep on their back. Sleeping with the head in a favorite position increases the risk of flattening of the back of the head. To avoid this make sure that the head positions are varied.



To half lie/half sit with the baby tummy to tummy is cosy and secure. It provides an opportunity for close contact with the child, and trains postural control of the head at the same time.



If the child has something interesting to look at, it will feel more at home on the tummy. To look at it self in a mirror is often appreciated.



A little chat whilst on the tummy is enjoyable at the same time as practicing head control.

If your child has difficulty lifting the head in the tummy position try raising the top part of the body so the child lies slightly 'uphill'. This will make it easier to raise the head.



Pillow



Rolled/folded towel or blanket



Roll



Wedge.



Lying over a parents leg

To lie across the adults lap can be a fun alternative.



This position provides a different visual perspective for the child.



Safe positioning along the adults legs, provides a different opportunity to look around.



Positioning the child along the adults legs and facing the adult can also be fun.

When the child is a few months old.



Playing aeroplanes is suitable at different ages providing you adapt the activity to suit the age of the infant.



Rocking on the adults' leg/foot.